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ABSTRACT

In fiscal year (FY) 1989, students enrolled in telecourses at Howard Community College (HCC) were surveyed at the end of each semester to determine their enrollment patterns, goals, sources of information about telecourses, reasons for enrolling in and satisfaction with the course, interest in computer-based distance learning, and personal characteristics. During FY89, 699 students enrolled in 27 telecourses at HCC. Survey responses from 448 of these students revealed the following: (1) the typical telecourse survey respondent was a 32-year-old white female with a high school diploma or higher and a full-time job during the semester in which the telecourse was taken; (2) 50% of the fall students, 42% of the spring students, and 28% of the summer students had taken previous telecourses at HCC; (3) during fall and spring, 36% and 34% of the students were concurrently taking evening classes at HCC; (4) 49% of the students were taking the telecourse to transfer to a four-year college; (5) 60.8% were interested in using a microcomputer to take tests or communicate with their instructor; (6) 39.6% had used the library's copies of the telecourse tapes; and (7) the top three reasons for enrolling in a telecourse were lack of time for regular courses, being able to combine college and family responsibilities, and minimizing travel. The survey instrument is appended. (JMC)

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DISTANCE LEARNERS: HOWARD COMMUNITY COLLEGE'S FISCAL YEAR 1989 TELECOURSE STUDENTS

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RESEARCH REPORT NUMBER 62
OCTOBER 1989

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DISTANCE LEARNERS: HCC'S FY89 TELECOURSE STUDENTS

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OCTOBER 1989

Office of Research and Personnel

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DISTANCE LEARNERS: HCC'S FY89 TELECOURSE STUDENTS

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REPORT SUMMARY

DISTANCE LEARNERS: HOWARD COMMUNITY COLLEGE'S FY89 TELECOURSE STUDENTS

There were almost 700 enrollments in telecourses at Howard Community College (HCC) during Fiscal Year 1989. This report describes the findings from surveys of telecourse students throughout that year. Highlights from the report are presented below.

- O During FY89 the typical telecourse survey respondent may be described as a 32 year old white female with a high school or higher education level who held a full-time job during the semester in which the telecourse was taken.

- O Telecourse enrollees had serious academic or career goals in taking telecourses. Transferring to a four year institution was the primary goal for the majority of survey respondents. The majority of telecourse enrollees who responded to the survey were also taking other HCC courses.

- O Survey respondents cited the schedule of classes as their primary source of information about HCC. The mailed schedule was also their clear preference for receiving future information.

- O The top three reasons students gave for enrolling in a telecourse were: lack of time, being able to combine college course with family responsibilities, and minimizing travel.

- O Overall, students were highly satisfied with the telecourses they took, and the majority expressed a willingness to take another telecourse. Instructor contact was rated as the most satisfying aspect of telecourses.

- O Among summer telecourse enrollees there was a higher proportion in the younger age groups. Most of this group was registered for fall classes, and seemed to view telecourses as a convenient way of picking up needed credits during the summer.

DISTANCE LEARNERS: HCC'S FY89 TELECOURSE STUDENTS

BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

Telecourses have become an increasingly popular alternative to classroom courses at Howard Community College (HCC) and at many other institutions throughout the country. It is estimated that close to 1,000 schools now use telecourses at least once a year. Telecourse use ranges from institutions offering a few telecourses to those having a well-developed program with scores of telecourses. On the average, among those schools that offer telecourses, three to five telecourses are offered, with an average total telecourse enrollment of fewer than 200 students.[1] In Maryland, a regional consortium of community colleges and four campuses of the University of Maryland system, College of the Air, is beginning its 19th year of broadcasting telecourses on Maryland Public Television.

Prospects for future telecourse enrollments are good. Many of those closely involved with telecourse development see the concept of telecourses broadening to include other forms of pre-produced instructional material for distance learners. These other forms might include live broadcasts on cable television, audio courses using audio cassettes, video cassettes to accompany telecourses, and micro-computer based modules. Today there is no rigid definition of what constitutes a telecourse. The definition keeps changing as new combinations of components are adapted to suit the subject matter, materials, and students involved.

Telecourse enrollments at HCC have risen dramatically since they were first introduced. In FY81 there were 109 telecourse enrollments, compared to 699 for FY89. Surveys of telecourse students have been conducted sporadically at HCC. In Fiscal Year 1989 an effort was made to conduct the same survey with telecourse students at the end of each semester. This report aggregates the data from these surveys and provides us with an opportunity to view FY89 telecourse enrollees as a group. The tables and text in the report also look at the data from each semester of the fiscal year in an attempt to determine if there were distinct differences between enrollees by semester. Sixty-four percent of the FY89 enrollments were accounted for with completed surveys.

Anecdotal reports by on-campus telecourse instructors indicated that summer telecourse enrollees might have some different characteristics and motivations than those enrolled in the fall and spring. For that reason, a special addition to the telecourse survey was designed for summer enrollees. The responses to the additional questions for summer enrollees are discussed in a separate section of the report.

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[1] Brey, R. (1989). Telecourse Utilization Survey Second Annual Report: Fall 1986 - Summer 1988 Semesters, A Research Project of the Instructional Telecommunications Consortium, AACJC, funded by the Annenberg/CPB Project.

WHAT WAS THE TELECOURSE ENROLLMENT PICTURE FOR FISCAL YEAR 1989?

A variety of telecourses was offered during fiscal year 1989. These credit courses could help students to meet requirements in diverse program areas. The telecourse survey was administered during one of the last classroom meetings with each course's on-campus instructor. **Table One** gives an overview of the enrollment in each telecourse for FY89 and also shows the percentage of each course's enrollees who responded to the survey. The table shows that:

- Within courses, percentages of enrollees responding to the telecourse survey ranged from 0% to 100%. Of the 26 courses offered, 21 had 50% or more of the enrollees responding to the survey.

- While 64% of the FY89 telecourse enrollments were accounted for with completed surveys, it should be remembered that a number of students were taking multiple telecourses, and a number may have taken telecourses each semester in FY89. No attempt was made to obtain a randomly selected sample, and since an entire course, or in a few cases, the majority of the enrollees in a course were not surveyed, it would not be appropriate to generalize the findings from this survey as true for all telecourse enrollees. The findings are certainly valid for the group who responded, and that group represents a majority of telecourse enrollees.

- **Chart One**, below, shows FY89 enrollment in telecourses by discipline. The top three divisions by total FY89 telecourse enrollments were: Business (12.2%), Psychology (11.4%), and Sociology (10.4%).

FY89 TELECOURSE ENROLLMENTS BY DISCIPLINE

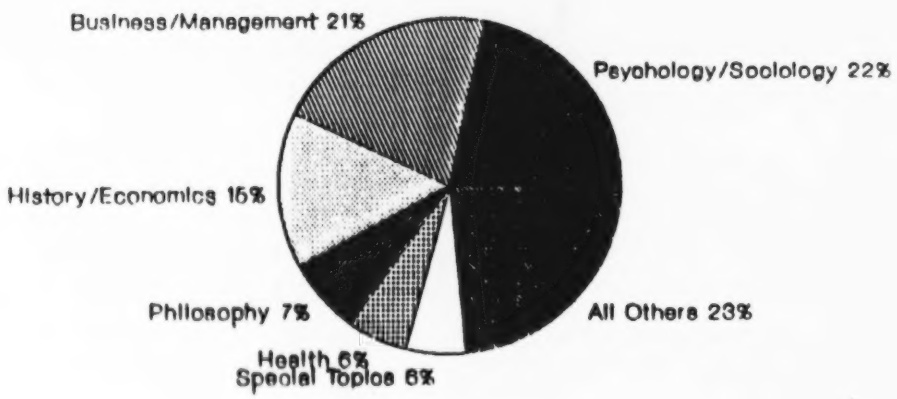


CHART ONE

TABLE ONE

TELECOURSE SURVEY RESPONDENTS AND TELECOURSE ENROLLMENT

		FY89 Enrollment	Respondents	% of Enrollees Responding
AC111	Principles of Accounting	11	5	45%
AR104	Art History I	11	0	0
BU100	Intro to Business and Organization	51	40	78%
BU130	Principles of Marketing	34	23	68%
CM111	Introduction to Composition	31	12	39%
CS110	Software Application for Micros	15	13	87%
CS120	Intro to Computer Systems	14	8	57%
EC101	Principles of Economics	24	13	54%
EC102	Principles of Economics	18	12	67%
FR101	Elementary French	12	6	50%
HE101	Intro to Health Education	40	24	60%
HY111	American History to 1877	47	37	79%
HY112	American History to 1877	16	13	81%
MA120	College and Algebra Trigonometry	17	10	59%
MN140	Principles of Management	63	39	62%
MU102	Survey of Musical Literature	3	3	100%
PL101	Introduction to Philosophy	50	38	76%
PO101	American Federal Government	24	13	54%
PY101	General Psychology	46	34	74%
PY103	Child Growth and Development	34	21	62%
SC104	Elementary Astronomy	25	17	68%
SO101	Introduction to Sociology	49	31	63%
SO103	Marriage and the Family	24	17	71%
ST383	Oceanus: The Marine Environment	18	11	61%
ST434	Humanities Through the Arts	5	2	40%
ST433	Japan - The Living Tradition	13	3	23%
ST455	War & Peace in the Nuclear Age	4	0	0
Unknown			3	
	TOTAL	699	448	64%

WHO TOOK TELECOURSES IN FY89?

Survey respondents were asked a series of questions to identify their demographic characteristics. Their responses are detailed in **Table Two**. Among the table's highlights are:

- For all of FY89 better than three-fourths of the respondents were female. (The only semester in which the percentage of females dipped under 75% was in the summer, when 72% of the respondents were female.) The predominance of females among telecourse survey respondents is higher than that in the overall credit population for FY89, which averaged about 60% female. While females may well have been more likely to respond to the survey, further investigation into the characteristics of non-respondent telecourse enrollees must be carried out to determine if the proportions are artificially inflated by this fact.

- During the fiscal year, almost 74% of those taking telecourses were between 21 and 40 years old. In each semester the age group of 21 to 30 years old accounted for the highest proportion of respondents, as it did in FY89 for all HCC credit enrollees. Summer session proved to have considerably more students in the 20 and under group and a comparatively lower number over 40 years old. Accordingly, summer session had the lowest mean age - 30.0 years.

- In Fiscal Year 1989 the racial makeup of the telecourses closely parallelled that of the overall credit population - 80% were white, and 11% were black.

- Overall, the telecourse enrollees were a well-educated group, with 32% of them having some kind of post-secondary credential. **Chart Two** shows the educational level of survey respondents. Summer students caused a blip in the proportion with certificates or AA degrees - 26% had those degrees, compared with 13% in the fall semester and 21% in the spring.

- Fully 70% of the FY89 telecourse survey respondents were working full time while they took their telecourses, as shown in **Chart Two**. Interestingly, the summer session had the highest proportion working full time (76%) and the highest proportion unemployed (7%).

- Of those who worked, over 82% each semester were on a regular day shift. During the fiscal year, 12% of the respondents took telecourses while they worked evening or rotating shifts.

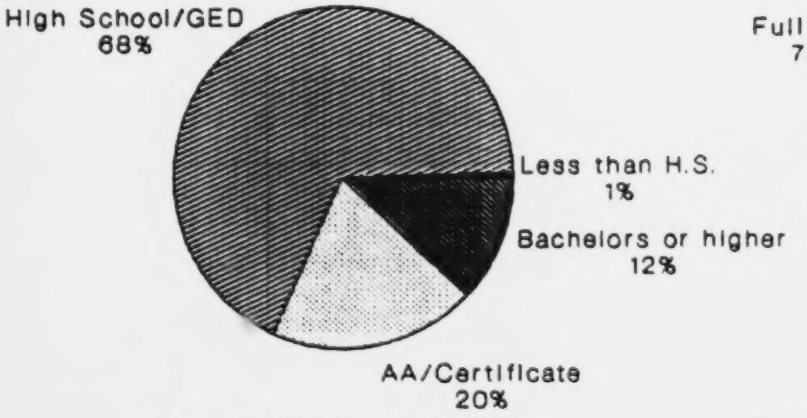
Based on the above observations, the typical telecourse survey respondent may be described as a white female between 21 and 40 years old, who was at least a high school graduate and was most likely working full time on a regular day shift.

TABLE TWO

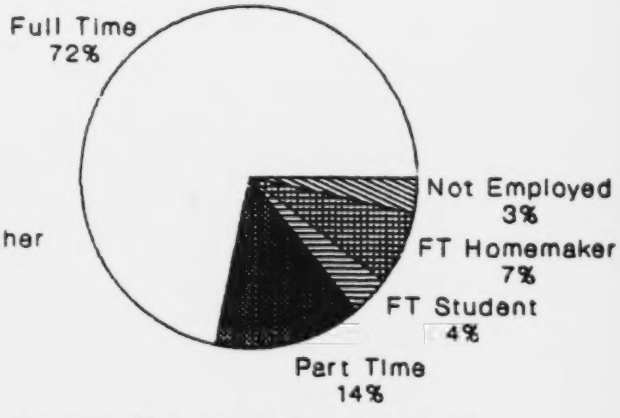
CHARACTERISTICS OF FY89 TELECOURSE ENROLLEES

Characteristic	Fall'88 n=154 %	Spring'89 n=191 %	Summer'89 n=103 %	Total n=448 %
Sex:				
Male	18.3	23.0	27.3	22.4
Female	81.0	77.0	71.7	77.6
Age:				
11-20	2.6	5.0	20.6	7.7
21-30	42.1	39.7	35.0	39.5
31-40	37.5	31.9	34.1	34.3
41-50	16.4	20.1	8.2	16.1
51 and over	1.3	3.4	2.1	2.3
Mean Age	32.6 years	33.2 years	30.0 years	32.3 years
Race:				
Black	13.0	7.3	14.6	10.9
White	83.8	79.6	75.7	80.1
Other/Unknown	3.2	13.2	9.7	8.9
Current Education Level:				
Less than 12th grade	0	0	2.0	0.5
GED	3.3	3.8	5.0	3.9
H.S. Diploma	72.2	61.2	55.0	63.6
Certificate	2.0	5.5	7.0	4.6
AA Degree	11.3	15.8	19.0	15.0
Bachelor's	7.9	9.8	8.0	8.8
Post Graduate	3.3	3.8	4.0	3.2
Employment Status:				
Full-Time	73.0	69.4	76.0	70.1
Part-Time	12.5	16.9	10.0	13.8
Full-Time Student	4.6	3.3	3.0	3.7
Full-Time Homemaker	8.6	7.1	4.0	6.9
Not Employed	1.3	2.7	7.0	3.2
Work Schedule:				
Regular Day Time	86.7	82.2	84.5	84.3
Early Evening	1.6	7.6	1.2	4.1
Late Evening	4.7	1.9	9.5	4.6
Rotating Shifts	7.0	8.3	4.8	7.0

EDUCATION LEVEL AND EMPLOYMENT STATUS OF FY89 TELECOURSE SURVEY RESPONDENTS



EDUCATION LEVEL



EMPLOYMENT STATUS

CHART TWO

WHAT WERE THE PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE ENROLLMENT PATTERNS OF TELECOURSE SURVEY RESPONDENTS?

Surveying telecourse students throughout Fiscal Year 1989 enabled us to identify patterns of telecourse enrollment and to some extent to anticipate the prospects of future enrollment by this same group of students. **Table Three** displays the overall picture of telecourse enrollment patterns. The table indicates that:

- During the regular academic year 50% (fall) and 42% (spring) had taken telecourses at HCC before. An additional 2% and 3%, respectively had taken telecourses elsewhere. This pattern was in marked contrast to the summer figures for previous telecourse enrollment: 28% had taken telecourses at HCC and 4% had taken them elsewhere.

- Close to half of the students in each semester would have enrolled in a standard class of the same course if the course had not been offered as a telecourse. For this group of students, it may well have been that obtaining the credits in that specific subject area at that particular time was the overriding reason for enrolling in a telecourse. For those who would not have enrolled in a standard class of the same course if a telecourse had not been offered, it might be assumed that time and scheduling constraints were among their reasons.

- The majority of respondents were taking only one telecourse. Between 18% (Summer) and 27% (Spring) were taking two or more telecourses during the semester in which they were surveyed.

- As for other classes taken during the semester, there was a distinct difference among summer and the sessions during the academic year. During the fall and spring, 36% and 34% of those taking telecourses were also taking evening classes at HCC. During the summer, 23% were doing so. When all HCC classes during a given semester were totaled, 74% during the fall, 68% during the spring, and 45% in the summer were taking other HCC courses. During the fall, less than 1% were taking classes at another college, in the spring 6% were, and in the summer 8% were.

TABLE THREE

SURVEY RESPONDENTS' PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE ENROLLMENT IN TELECOURSES

Survey Item	Fall'88 n=154 %	Spring'89 n=191 %	Summer'89 n=103 %	Total n=448 %
Have taken T.V. credit college course before:				
Yes, at HCC	50.0	42.0	28.2	41.6
Yes, elsewhere	1.9	3.2	3.9	2.9
No	48.1	54.8	68.0	55.5
Would have enrolled in standard class of same course:				
Yes	53.0	55.2	50.0	53.2
No	47.0	44.8	50.0	46.8
Other Telecourse now taking:				
None	67.3	72.8	82.3	73.0
One	26.0	22.5	17.7	22.7
Two	5.3	4.6	0	3.8
Three or more	1.3	0	0	0.5
Other college classes this semester:				
Evening class on HCC campus	36.4	33.6	22.9	32.0
Day class on HCC campus	15.6	15.7	11.9	14.8
None	25.3	25.8	45.9	30.4
Other Telecourse(s)	18.8	14.7	9.2	14.8
Off-campus HCC campus	1.9	2.3	1.8	2.0
Class(es) at another college	0.6	6.0	8.3	4.8
Weekend HCC class	1.3	1.8	0	1.2
Primary goal in taking courses:				
Transfer to a four year institution	48.1	46.8	54.4	49.0
Exploration of new career or academic area	13.0	19.7	10.7	15.3
Preparation of immediate entry into a career	13.0	10.6	11.7	11.7
Update skills for a job currently held	9.1	8.0	6.8	8.1
Interest and self-enrichment	9.7	6.4	4.9	7.2
Other	7.1	8.5	11.7	8.8
Would take another Telecourse:				
Yes	90.1	90.9	81.0	88.4
No	9.9	9.1	19.0	11.5
Interested in micro/modem to communicate or take exams:				
Yes	52.7	66.7	62.4	60.8
No	47.3	33.3	37.6	39.2
Have a micro available for use:				
Yes	51.6	57.9	53.0	54.6
No	48.4	42.1	47.0	45.4
Have a modem available for use:				
Yes	28.3	34.4	31.2	31.5
No	71.7	65.6	68.8	68.4
Have a VCR:				
Yes	94.1	97.3	93.1	95.2
No	5.9	2.7	6.9	4.8
Viewing pattern:				
Always record for later viewing	38.6	35.4	39.6	37.5
Usually record for later viewing	21.4	25.8	20.8	23.2
Usually watch as it is televised	17.9	15.7	11.5	15.5
Always watch as it is televised	13.8	11.2	19.8	14.1
Don't watch or record, but rely on textbook	7.6	11.8	8.3	9.5
Have used library tapes:				
Yes	37.5	44.8	33.0	39.6
No	61.8	55.2	67.0	60.3
Satisfied with library tapes:				
Yes	93.1	86.4	78.8	87.2
No	6.9	13.6	21.2	12.8

- Throughout the fiscal year, the primary goal of taking telecourses for the majority of the respondents was to transfer to a four year institution. (See **Chart Three**). While this was true for almost half of those during the academic year, that figure rose to 54% among summer enrollees. A sizeable group, ranging from 11% in the summer to 20% in the spring, was taking telecourses to explore a new career or academic area. Another group, ranging from 11% to 13% was preparing for immediate entry into a career. The goals of updating skills for a current job or personal interest varied as primary reasons between 5% and 10%.

- During the academic year, 90 or 91% of the respondents said they would take another telecourse. During the summer, 81% said they would.

- In each semester, more than half of the respondents indicated an interest in using a microcomputer and modem to communicate with instructors and/or take exams. Likewise, over half said that they have a microcomputer available for use. Considerably fewer (32% overall), indicated that they had a modem available for use.

- Ninety-five percent of the respondents said that they had a video cassette recorder available for use. Indeed, the widespread accessibility to VCRs may have been a significant factor in the increased interest and enrollment in telecourses over the last decade.

- As for viewing patterns, more of the respondents always or usually recorded the programs for later viewing (61% overall) than any other method of viewing. Thirty percent always or usually watched the programs as they were televised. Surprisingly, 9% of the respondents admitted to not watching or recording the programs at all, but relying the textbook.

- About 40% of the respondents over the year used the library tapes of the courses. Among those who did, 87% were satisfied with the library tapes.

The above points reveal that during the summer there are likely to be more enrollees who are experiencing their first telecourse and who may be taking only the single telecourse. During the academic year, the majority of telecourse enrollees were taking other HCC classroom courses. These respondents had serious academic or career goals in taking telecourses, and the majority said they would be willing to take another telecourse. It will be of interest to watch for trends among those who express an interest in using microcomputers and modems for instructional purposes. Their willingness to do so may signal a new direction in instruction and course offerings.

PRIMARY GOAL FOR FY89 TELECOURSE ENROLLEES

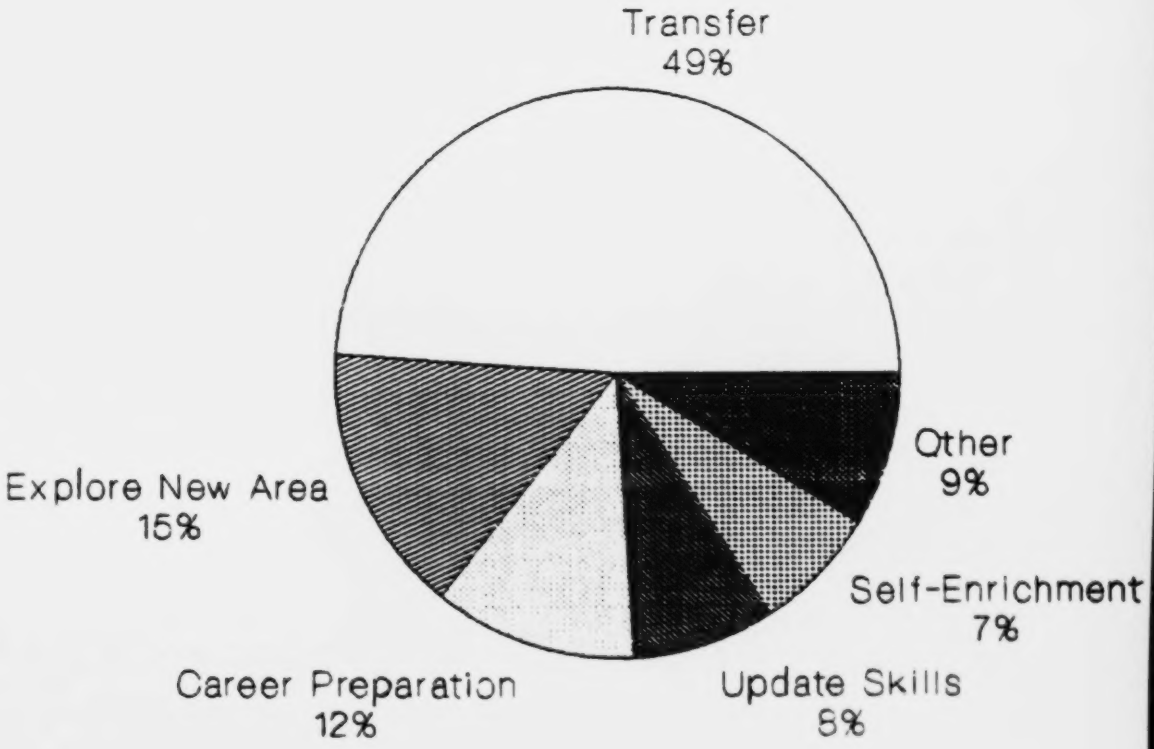


CHART THREE

HOW DID STUDENTS FIND OUT ABOUT TELECOURSES?

Determining how students usually find out about telecourses could have an impact on future marketing efforts. The surveys conducted during FY89 asked respondents how they found out about the telecourses in which they enrolled. **Table Four A** displays their responses in rank order, from the most frequently identified to the least. **Table Four B** shows respondents' preferred methods of finding out information about future telecourses. The tables' highlights include:

- For students during the regular academic year, the schedule of classes mailed to the home was the first source cited by over half of the respondents. Summer enrollees, however, were somewhat less likely (40%) to say that the mailed schedule was their primary source of information about telecourses.

- For summer students, the most common source of telecourse information cited was the schedule of classes picked up at HCC, with 42% of them saying that was how they found out about their telecourse(s).

- Students indicated a clear preference to be informed about telecourses by mail. For the entire fiscal year, 65% of them said that they preferred to have a schedule of classes mailed to their homes. An additional 20% said they would like a telecourse brochure mailed to them. Ten percent indicated that they would be willing to pick up a telecourse brochure at HCC. For no other method of informing students about telecourses was a strong preference indicated by a significant percentage of the respondents.

As a point of comparison, in the Outreach and Information Survey conducted in December 1988, HCC students were asked what they considered to be their most important source of information in deciding to attend HCC. The Schedule of Classes mailed to their homes was clearly the most important source for those survey respondents, as it was for the telecourse survey respondents. Given the importance placed on it by these students and those surveyed at other times, as well as the definite preference to be informed about courses by mail, the mailed schedule should continue to be emphasized as a primary vehicle for communicating with students and as a recruitment and retention instrument.

TABLE FOUR A.

HOW SURVEY RESPONDENTS FOUND OUT ABOUT THEIR TELECOURSE

Information Source	Fall '88 n=154 %	Spring '89 n=191 %	Summer '89 n=103 %	Total n=448 %
Schedule of classes mailed to home	55.8	51.1	39.8	50.2
Schedule of classes picked up at HCC	27.3	30.6	41.8	32.0
Telecourse brochure mailed to home	10.4	3.8	10.2	7.5
Telecourse brochure picked up at HCC	1.9	3.2	2.0	2.5
Recommended by friend/relative	1.9	3.2	1.0	2.3
Telephone conversation/HCC Telecourse Office	1.3	3.2	1.0	2.1
HCC counseling center/advisor	0.6	2.2	2.0	1.6
Howard County Cable	0	0	2.0	0.5
Maryland Public Television	0	1.1	0	0.5
Other	0.6	1.6	0	0.9

TABLE FOUR B.

SURVEY RESPONDENTS' FIRST CHOICE FOR SOURCES OF FUTURE INFORMATION

Information Source	Fall '88 n=154 %	Spring '89 n=191 %	Summer '89 n=103 %	Total n=448 %
Schedule of classes mailed to home	64.5	72.0	54.4	65.3
Telecourse brochure mailed to home	22.7	13.4	26.7	19.7
Schedule of classes picked up at HCC	6.4	9.1	16.7	9.9
Telephone conversation/HCC Telecourse Office	2.8	2.6	1.1	2.5
Maryland Public Television	1.4	1.0	1.1	1.3
HCC counseling center/advisor	1.4	0.5	0	0.8
Recommended by friend/relative	0	1.0	0	0.5
Telecourse brochure picked up at HCC	0.7	-	0	0.3
Howard County Cable	0	0.5	0	0.3
Other	0.7	-	0	0

WHAT INFLUENCED STUDENTS' DECISIONS TO REGISTER FOR A TELECOURSE?

On the telecourse surveys administered during FY89, the students were asked to rate the importance of eight specific reasons for registering for a telecourse. **Table Five** and **Chart Four** show the percentage of respondents who rated each of the reasons as "Very Important." Findings from the data are shown below:

- In each semester, a majority of the enrollees said that they were taking a telecourse because they lacked the time for class attendance. Summer enrollees were somewhat less likely to say they lacked time: 59%, versus 72% and 71% for the fall and spring, respectively.

- Being able to combine college courses with family responsibilities was listed as a very important reason by 67% of the respondents during both semesters of the academic year and 58% of the summer students.

- Over half of the respondents each semester said that minimizing travel was a very important reason for registering for a telecourse.

- While 40% of the students during the regular academic year said that the fact that telecourses allowed them to take a heavier course load was a very important reason for registering, only 28% of summer respondents said that was very important to them.

- A higher percentage of summer enrollees (23%) responded that trying a new learning method was a very important reason for enrolling in a telecourse, while 14% of the fall students and 10% of the spring said so.

- The fact that a given course was only available as a telecourse was very important to relatively more of the summer enrollees: 18%, versus 7% in the fall and 14% in the spring.

- Judging by the responses, few of the telecourse enrollees registered for those courses because they thought that a telecourse would be less difficult (5% overall).

- Telecourses were more appealing than regular courses for a number of those who had handicaps, and although there appeared to be few in this category (3% overall), for them telecourses may well have been their best alternative method of earning college credit. For some in that group, it may have been the only way of getting college credit.

TABLE FIVE

PERCENT OF RESPONDENTS RATING REASONS AS VERY IMPORTANT FOR REGISTERING FOR A TELECOURSE

Reasons	Fall '88 n=154 %	Spring '89 n=191 %	Summer '89 n=103 %	Total n=448 %
Lacked time for class attendance	72.4	70.8	58.8	68.6
Possible combine family responsibility	67.1	67.4	58.0	65.1
Minimize travel	54.2	60.2	52.9	56.5
Allowed a heavier load	40.3	40.4	28.4	37.6
Try a new learning method	13.9	10.1	22.5	14.4
Course only available as telecourse	6.6	13.5	18.0	12.1
Thought telecourse less difficult	4.1	6.7	5.0	5.4
Handicaps make telecourse more appealing	2.0	3.4	5.0	3.3

Lack of time, family responsibilities, and minimizing travel were the top three reasons given for enrolling in a telecourse. Remembering that the majority of the survey respondents were women, it might be tempting to portray the telecourse enrollee as a housewife fitting the telecourse into her routine of child care and housework. It must also be remembered, however, that the vast majority of survey respondents were employed. The majority of respondents were also taking other HCC courses. Given those last two facts, the image of a woman watching a telecourse as she folds the laundry is quickly replaced by that of a student performing a delicate balancing act to meet the demands and responsibilities of home, work, and school.

REASONS RATED AS VERY IMPORTANT FOR REGISTERING FOR A TELECOURSE

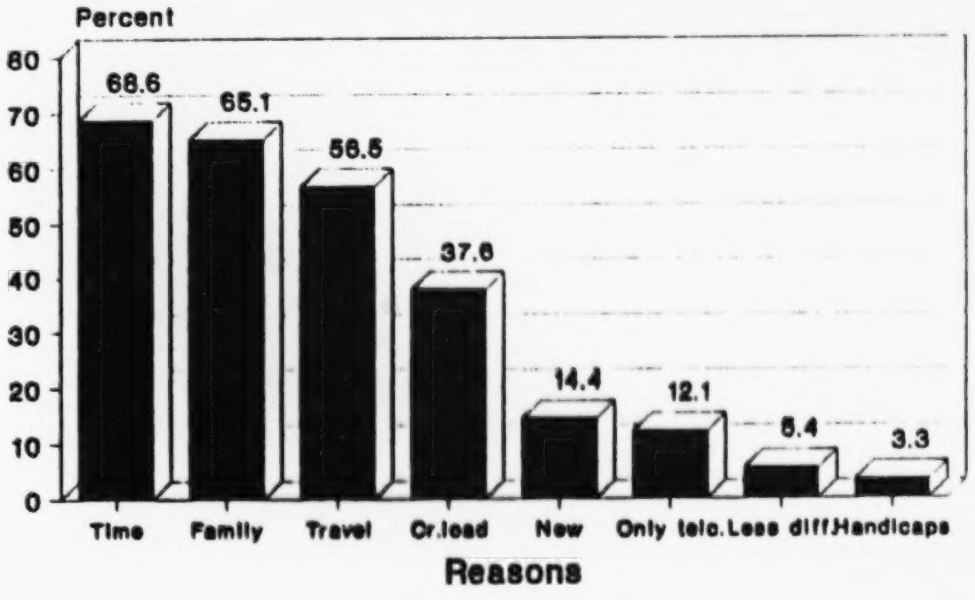


CHART FOUR

HOW SATISFIED WERE RESPONDENTS WITH THEIR TELECOURSES?

Learning about students' satisfaction with various aspects of telecourses is one of the first steps in planning and marketing future telecourse programs. The survey asked students to rate their satisfaction with specific elements of the telecourses on a five point scale, with one being "not at all satisfied" and five meaning "highly satisfied." **Table Six** shows the mean ratings on four course elements and an overall satisfaction rating. Points of interest gleaned from the table include:

- Instructor contact received high satisfaction ratings throughout the fiscal year. When all ratings were taken together, in fact, it was the highest rated course element with a 4.0 mean rating score.

- The text/study guides for telecourses received the second highest ratings, with a mean score of 3.9 for the fiscal year.

- The content and presentation of material were two areas that received relatively lower ratings, with means of 3.4 and 3.3 respectively for the fiscal year. It should be pointed out, however, that since a score of 3.0 indicated satisfaction, any score above that is really a positive rating.

- In terms of overall satisfaction with telecourses, the mean score for the year was 3.8. In this overall score and in scores for the course elements, summer students tended to give lower scores than those enrolled in the fall or spring.

It is certainly interesting to note that these telecourse enrollees rated their contact with the instructor as the most satisfying aspect of their telecourse. That fact, coupled with numerous written comments indicating a desire for more contact with instructors might prompt one to advise these students to take a regular classroom course. Remembering that most respondents were indeed taking classroom courses and that they seem to be under severe time constraints leads to the conclusion that telecourses may not have been the first choice for these students, but may well have been the best alternative for them. The high level of overall satisfaction with telecourses, and the willingness of the vast majority of respondents to take another telecourse indicate that for this group of students, telecourses were doing a very good job in meeting their academic expectations and needs.

TABLE SIX

SURVEY RESPONDENTS' MEAN RATINGS OF SATISFACTION WITH THEIR TELECOURSE

Telecourse Element	Mean Scores on a Five-Point Scale			
	Fall'88 n=154	Spring'89 n=191	Summer'89 n=103	Total n=448
Instructor contact	4.0	4.1	3.7	4.0
Content of material	3.4	3.4	3.3	3.4
Presentation of material	3.4	3.3	3.3	3.3
Text/study guide	4.0	4.0	3.7	3.9
Overall satisfaction	3.8	3.9	3.6	3.8

WHAT DISTINGUISHED SUMMER TELECOURSE ENROLLEES FROM THOSE IN OTHER SEMESTERS?

The preceding discussion has focused on findings from the telecourse surveys during fiscal year 1989. In the discussion it was apparent that on some items there was a distinction between summer telecourse enrollees and those who were enrolled during the regular academic year. An overview of the points on which summer enrollees differed shows that:

- Although the majority of telecourse students were female, relatively more males enrolled during the summer session.
- Summer students were somewhat younger, with a mean age of 30 versus 33 years for each of the other semesters.
- More summer enrollees had AA degrees or certificates.
- Comparatively more of the summer enrollees were working full-time, while paradoxically, more were also unemployed.
- More summer telecourse enrollees were new to the telecourse experience, with most never having taken a telecourse before.
- Relatively fewer summer telecourse enrollees were taking other classes at the same time as their telecourse.
- A higher percentage of summer enrollees had the goal of transferring credits to a four year institution as their primary goal in taking a telecourse.
- A lower proportion of summer enrollees used the library tapes of their telecourses.

- The most common method of summer telecourse enrollees finding out about their telecourse was to pick up a schedule at HCC, whereas during the other semesters mailed schedules were the primary information source.

- Summer enrollees were somewhat less likely to say that they were taking a telecourse because they lacked the time for a regular course.

- Combining family responsibilities with college courses and carrying a heavy course load were cited as very important by a smaller percentage of summer students.

- Higher proportions of summer attendees said that trying a new learning method and the fact that a course was only available as a telecourse were very important to them.

- Summer enrollees were somewhat more likely to give lower scores on the satisfaction index than were fall or spring enrollees.

The differences noted above for summer telecourse enrollees were identified by comparing their responses on the telecourse survey to the responses of the fall and spring enrollees. The summer telecourse enrollees were also given a separate addition to the survey in an attempt to understand how their motivations differ from those who take telecourses during the regular academic year. The expanded data gathered on summer students are displayed in **Table Seven.** The data show that:

- Just over two-thirds of the summer students had previously taken credit courses at HCC. Fully 93% of those who had attended HCC had done so within the last two years.

- Fifty-three percent of the summer enrollees had taken credit courses at another college or university. Of that group, 37% had attended five or more years ago, 13% had attended two to four years ago, and 50% had attended less than two years ago.

TABLE SEVEN

RESPONSES TO THE EXPANDED SUMMER EDITION OF THE TELECOURSE SURVEY

	%
o HCC Credit Courses:	
Yes	67.0
No	33.0
o Last attended HCC: (n=56)	
Two or more years ago	7.2
Within the last two years	92.8
o Credit courses at another college or university:	
Yes	53.2
No	36.8
o Last attended other institution:	
Five or more years ago	37.0
Two to four years ago	13.0
Less than two years ago	50.0
o Register for Fall 89 courses:	
Yes, at HCC	50.0
Yes, elsewhere	27.1
No	22.9
o Rated as Very Important reason:	
Need credits in subject area	83.3
Need credits for transferring	49.5
Need credits by a specific date	41.3
Meet certification requirements	40.9
Limited number of summer courses	29.5
More time in summer	21.1
Closed out of regular course	2.3
o Type of credit course of choice:	
Classroom course	57.1
Telecourse	35.2
Computerized course	3.3
Other	4.4

- More than three-fourths of those enrolled in summer telecourses were registered for fall courses: 50% of those at HCC and 27% elsewhere.

- When summer enrollees were asked to rate the importance of various reasons in their decision to take a telecourse, 83% said that the fact that they needed credits in a specific subject area was very important. Close to one half said that needing the credits for transferring was a very important reason for enrolling in a telecourse. Forty-one percent appeared to feel some time pressure, since they said that they needed the credits by a specific date. Forty-one percent also said that it was very important to them that the telecourse met certification requirements.

- Almost 30% of the students in summer telecourses stated that a very important reason for their enrolling was that there was a limited number of summer courses available. Twenty-one percent said that they had more time in the summer for course work. Being closed out of a regular course on the same topic was rated as an important reason for enrolling in a telecourse by relatively few students.

- Summer telecourse students were asked what type of course they would prefer to take if they had a choice. Fifty-seven percent indicated that they would take a classroom course, while 35% preferred telecourses. Although regular classroom courses were offered during the summer, for this group of students they were apparently not a viable alternative. Work schedules and other time constraints undoubtedly were a factor in their choosing telecourses over regular courses.

Most of the summer telecourse survey respondents were taking their first telecourse, but the majority were not new to HCC - over two-thirds had taken credit courses here before within the last two years. Most of these students had a goal of transferring, and said that they needed credits in that specific subject area. More than three-fourths of the summer survey respondents were registered for courses in the fall semester - half at HCC. Although the average age was somewhat lower for summer respondents, proportionately there really were quite a few more in the younger age groups than there were during the academic year. This group of students seemed to view telecourses as a convenient way of picking up needed credits during the summer.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

This analysis of telecourse enrollees over three semesters of one fiscal year has enabled us to describe this group according to certain characteristics and to look at some inter-semester differences among the telecourse enrollees who responded to the survey. Information gleaned from this survey may serve to guide future program planning, policy decisions, and marketing strategies. For a substantial number of respondents, telecourses seem to be answering a very real need and enabling them to obtain college credits when they might otherwise not be able to do so. There is every reason to believe that this group will continue to value the opportunity that telecourses give them to earn college credits from a distance.

In general, telecourse enrollees may be described as hard-working adults with career and family responsibilities and time constraints that either prohibit them from registering for a classroom course or from adding another classroom course to their already busy schedule. Furthermore, they have serious academic or career goals in mind when they register for telecourses.

As noted in the introduction, telecourses constitute a form of distance learning and are continuing to evolve as they develop new formats and incorporate such components as live cable broadcasts, video rentals, and computer-based modules. Being aware of these exciting trends, colleges should continue to monitor the interest and goals of telecourse enrollees and keep current with new developments in distance learning.

HOWARD COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Survey of Telecourse Students

Course: _____ (1-5)

Social Security Number: _____ (6-14)

1. Have you ever taken a course by television for college credit before?
   - ___ 1. Yes, at HCC
   - ___ 2. Yes, at another institution (15)
   - ___ 3. No

2. If this course had not been offered in a telecourse format, would you have enrolled in a *standard class* of the same course this semester?
   - ___ 1. Yes
   - ___ 2. No (16)

3. In addition to this telecourse, how many other telecourses are you taking? (Do not count this course.)
   - _____ Telecourses (17)

4. In addition to this telecourse, what other college classes are you attending this semester? *(Check all that apply)*
   - ___ 1. Other Telecourse(s) (18)
   - ___ 2. Day class on HCC campus (Mon-Fri) (19)
   - ___ 3. Evening class on HCC campus (Mon-Fri) (20)
   - ___ 4. Off-campus HCC class (21)
   - ___ 5. Weekend HCC class (22)
   - ___ 6. Class(es) at another college (23)
   - ___ 7. None (24)

5. What is your primary goal in taking college courses? *(Please check one.)*
   - ___ 1. Exploration of new career or academic area
   - ___ 2. Preparation for immediate entry into a career
   - ___ 3. Transfer to a four-year institution
   - ___ 4. Update skills for a job currently held (25)
   - ___ 5. Interest and self-enrichment
   - ___ 6. Other (Please specify): _____

6. Prior to registration, how did you find out about the telecourse you are taking? *(Please check one.)*
   - ___ 1. Telephone conversation with HCC Telecourse Office
   - ___ 2. HCC Schedule of Classes mailed to my home
   - ___ 3. HCC Schedule of Classes picked up at HCC
   - ___ 4. Telecourse Brochure mailed to my home
   - ___ 5. Telecourse Brochure picked up at HCC
   - ___ 6. Telecourse Brochure picked up at other location (please specify): _____ (26,27)
   - ___ 7. HCC Counseling Center or advisor
   - ___ 8. Howard County Cable 8 TV
   - ___ 9. Maryland Public Television station
   - ___ 10. Recommended by friend/relative
   - ___ 11. Other (please specify): _____

7. Of all the information sources listed above, please list by number the three you most prefer for learning about future telecourses.
   - First Choice: _____ (28)
   - Second Choice: _____ (29)
   - Third Choice: _____ (30)

8. What influenced your decision to register for a telecourse? Please rate each reason as either very important, of some influence, or not a factor in your decision.

REASON	1. VERY IMPORTANT	2. SOME INFLUENCE	3. NOT A FACTOR	
• Minimized travel to and from campus	___	___	___	(31)
• Allowed me to carry a heavier course load	___	___	___	(32)
• Lacked time for regular classroom attendance	___	___	___	(33)
• Wanted to try a new learning method	___	___	___	(34)
• Thought this would be less difficult/less work	___	___	___	(35)
• Made it possible to combine college course(s) with family responsibility	___	___	___	(36)
• This particular course only available as a telecourse	___	___	___	(37)
• Temporary or permanent handicaps make telecourses more appealing	___	___	___	(38)

9 Please indicate your level of satisfaction with the following elements of this telecourse. *(Circle one number per item.)*	HIGHLY SATISFIED	QUITE SATISFIED	SATISFIED	SOMEWHAT SATISFIED	NOT AT ALL SATISFIED	
• Instructor contact	5	4	3	2	1	(39)
• Content of televised material	5	4	3	2	1	(40)
• Presentation of televised material	5	4	3	2	1	(41)
• The text/study guide	5	4	3	2	1	(42)
• Overall satisfaction with this telecourse	5	4	3	2	1	(43)

10. Would you take another telecourse? ___1. Yes ___2. No (44)

11. Would you be interested in courses using a microcomputer and modem at your home or office to communicate with your instructor and/or to take exams? ___1. Yes ___2. No (45)

12. Do you have a microcomputer available for your use? ___1. Yes ___2. No (46)

13. Do you have a modem available for your use? ___1. Yes ___2. No (47)

14. Do you have a VCR? ___1. Yes ___2. No (48)

15. Do you usually watch the telecourse as it is televised, or do you record it for later viewing? (Please check only one.)
___1. I always watch as the course is televised
___2. I usually watch as it is televised
___3. I always record it for later viewing
___4. I usually record it for later viewing
___5. Frankly, I don't even watch or record the programs, but rely on the textbook (49)

16. A. Have you used the library tapes of your telecourse? ___1. Yes ___2. No (50)

B. If yes, has this been satisfactory? ___1. Yes ___2. No (51)

17. A. Please indicate your employment status while you were taking the telecourse.
___1. Employed full-time (30/more hours a week)
___2. Employed part-time
___3. In military
___4. Full-time student
___5. Full-time homemaker
___6. Not employed (52)

B. If employed, what schedule did you work?
___1. Regular daytime schedule
___2. Early evening schedule
___3. Late evening schedule
___4. Rotating shifts (53)

18. What is your current level of education? *(Check one.)*
___1. Less than 12th grade ___5. A.A. Degree
___2. G.E.D. ___6. Bachelor's Degree
___3. High School Diploma ___7. Master's Degree
___4. Certificate ___8. Doctoral Degree (54)

19. Please check your gender. ___1. Male ___2. Female (55)

20. What is your age? _____ Years (56,57)

21. What is your race
___1. Black ___4. Hispanic
___2. American Indian ___5. White
___3. Asian ___6. Other (58)

22. What aspect of the telecourse did you like best? _____

_____

23. What aspect of the telecourse would you like to see improved? _____

_____

AL ADDITION TO THE TELECOURSE SURVEY FOR SUMMER ENROLLEES

SSN:_____

ave you taken credit courses (other than telecourses) at HCC before?
__1. Yes
__2. No

yes, when was the last date you attended?
____(Year)_____(Month)

ave you taken credit courses (other than telecourses) at another college or university?
__1. Yes
__2. No

f yes, when was the last date you attended?
____(Year)_____(Month)
f yes, what was the institution?_____

Are you registered for college credit courses for the Fall 1989 semester?
__1. Yes, at HCC
__2. Yes, at another institution
__3. No

IF registered at another institution, please specify:_____

What is your major?_____

How important were the following reasons in your decision to take a telecourse THIS SUMMER?

REASON	1. VERY IMPORTANT	2. SOME INFLUENCE	3. NOT A FACTOR
ed credits in this subject area	___	___	___
ed credits by a specific date	___	___	___
ed these credits for transferring	___	___	___
e:s certification requirements	___	___	___
ted number of regular courses offered this subject area during summer	___	___	___
losed out of a regular course on this topic	___	___	___
more time in summer for course work	___	___	___

If you had a choice, what type of credit course would you take?
__1. Telecourse
__2. Classroom course
__3. Computerized course
__4.Other:_____

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